INITIAL STUDY / ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SECTION 4(F) EVALUATION

BEFORE

AFTER

07-LA-405 K.P.41.0/47.6 (P.M. 25.5/29.6)

Federal Highway Administration

California Department of Transportation

June 2000

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SCH No. 1999111073
07-LA-405-41.0/47.6 (PM 25.5/29.6)
07223-1178A0 and 1178C0

NEGATIVE DECLARATION (CEQA)

Pursuant to: Division 13, Public Resources Code

Description

The proposed project would widen Interstate 405 (San Diego Freeway) from ten to twelve lanes in order to provide one high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane in each direction. The project would extend from State Route 90 (Marina Freeway) to Interstate 10 (Santa Monica Freeway), in the Cities of Los Angeles and Culver City, in Los Angeles County, a distance of 6.6 kilometers (4.1 miles). In addition, the northbound Sawtelle off-ramp will be closed and the Culver Boulevard on-ramp will be become an off-ramp. A frontage road will be added adjacent to the southbound side, connecting Sawtelle Boulevard to Braddock Drive west of I-405. The project is being proposed to relieve traffic congestion by encouraging commuters to rideshare, and is one of several such projects being considered for I-405 to provide for a continuous HOV facility.

Construction of the proposed project is expected to require approximately three years. Construction activities would be planned and conducted in such a manner as to reduce traffic delay as much as possible. The construction process would be managed by a traffic control plan. Soundwalls and retaining walls would also be constructed as part of the proposed project.

Determination

An Initial Study has been prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). On the basis of this study it is determined that the proposed action will not have a significant effect upon the environment for the following reasons:

1. The project would not substantially affect topography, seismic exposure, erosion, floodplains, wetlands or water quality.

2. The proposed project will not significantly affect natural vegetation, sensitive, endangered or threatened plant or animal species, or agriculture.

3. The proposed project will not significantly affect solid wastes, or the consumption of energy and natural resources.

4. The proposed project will promote improved regional air quality.

5. The proposed project will result in increased noise levels along its route, but with the addition of soundwalls, these effects will be reduced to acceptable levels.

6. The proposed project will not significantly affect land use, public facilities or other socioeconomic features.

7. The proposed project will not significantly affect cultural resources, scenic resources, aesthetics, open space or parklands. Landscaping will be provided to mitigate the loss of existing freeway vegetation.

Original Signed by Ronald Kosinski for Raja Mitwasi *June 19, 2000*

Raja Mitwasi, Deputy Director
California Department of Transportation
District 7

Date

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Note: A vertical line in the margin indicates that changes were made in the text from the Draft Environmental Document (Initial Study / Environmental Assessment) to the Final Environmental Document (Negative Declaration / Finding of No Significant Impact).

Initial Study / Environmental Assessment (IS/EA)

1. Purpose and Need for the Project

1.1 Introduction

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) proposes to improve traffic conditions in Los Angeles County on the section of the San Diego Freeway [Interstate 405 (I-405)] between the Santa Monica Freeway [Interstate 10 (I-10)] and the Marina Freeway [State Route 90 (SR-90)], a distance of 6.4 kilometers (4.1 miles). Improvements under discussion include the addition of two High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, one in each direction, addition of a full standard median, widen outside shoulder, and addition of a retaining wall, soundwalls, and ramp realignments. The alternatives presented in this document follow, in part, recommendations provided in the 1991 Route Concept Report for incorporation of HOV lanes into this corridor. High Occupancy Vehicles are defined for this project as vehicles with two or more persons. The alternatives presented vary in cost from 83.3 to 97.7 million dollars. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds are anticipated to fund this proposed project.

1.2 Background

Interstate 405 is included in the National Highway System (NHS), and has been recognized as an essential link in a multi-modal transportation network. The I-405 is an interstate/interregional freeway, which originates at Interstate 5 (I-5) in Orange County, in the City of Irvine, and terminates at I-5 in Los Angeles County near the community of Mission Hills. The route spans a total of 117 kilometers (72.7 miles) with 78 kilometers (48.5 miles) in District 7, Los Angeles County. The I-405 is one of the most heavily traveled freeways in the State as shown by the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes. Since it is the only north-south freeway west of downtown Los Angeles, most of the mobility of the Westside is dependent on this freeway.

This section of I-405 in West Los Angeles traverses the incorporated City of Los Angeles and the communities of Mar Vista, Palms, and Westchester, and the City of Culver City and the neighborhoods of Clarkdale, McLaughlin, Park-West, Sunkist Park, and Fox Hills (Figure 1; Figure 2). Major traffic generators include the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), one regional shopping center (Fox Hills Mall), West Los Angeles College, and Marina Del Rey. One Park and Ride lot serves the area within the limits of this project, located at Saint John's Presbyterian Church (11000 National Boulevard, Los Angeles) adjacent to I-405 and near I-10. There are no proposed Park and Ride lots for this project.

1.3 Purpose and Need

Current data indicate growth in vehicular traffic for this segment of I-405 will occur over the next fifteen years. Peak hour volumes will increase to 12,100 (southbound) and 11,700

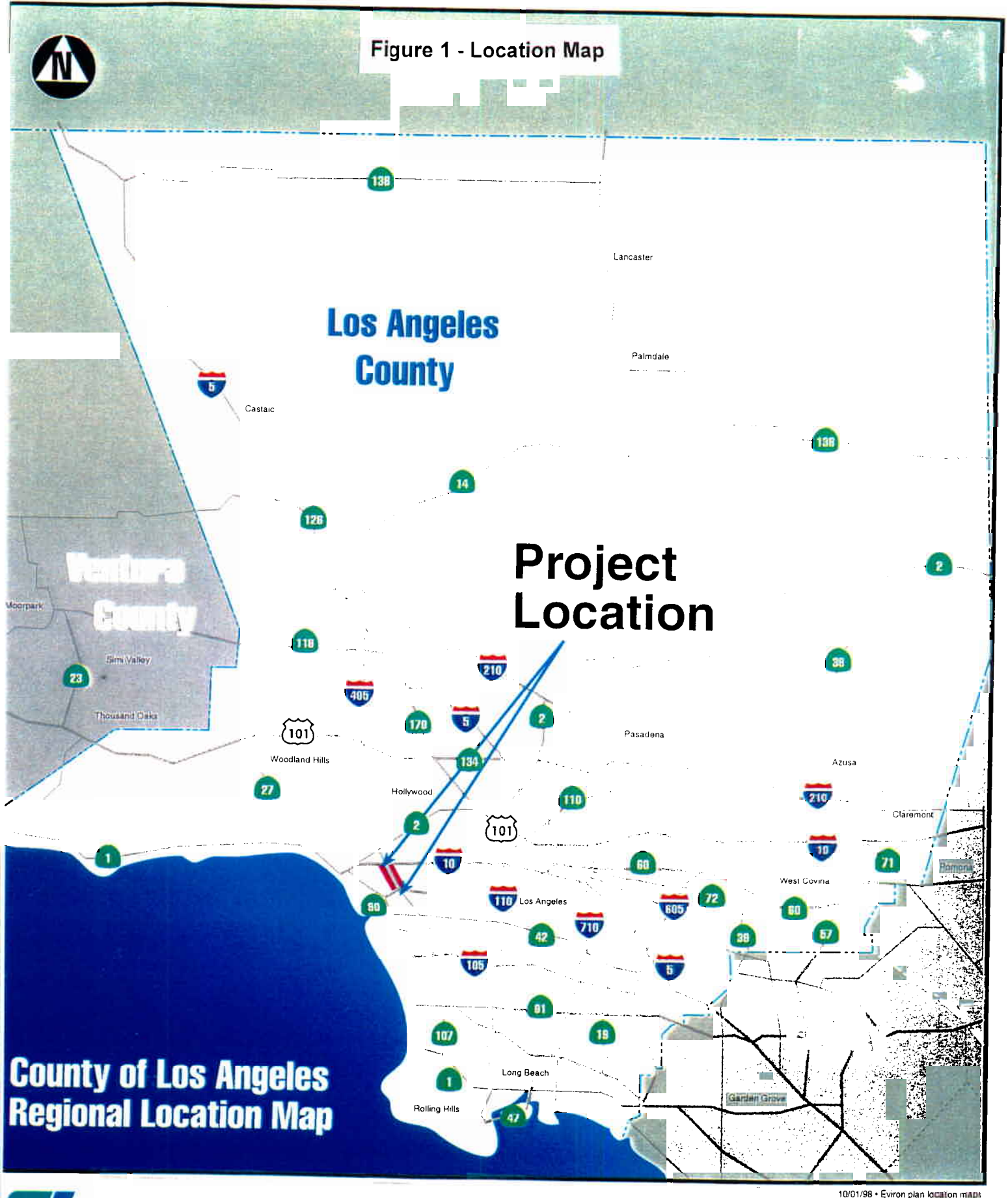
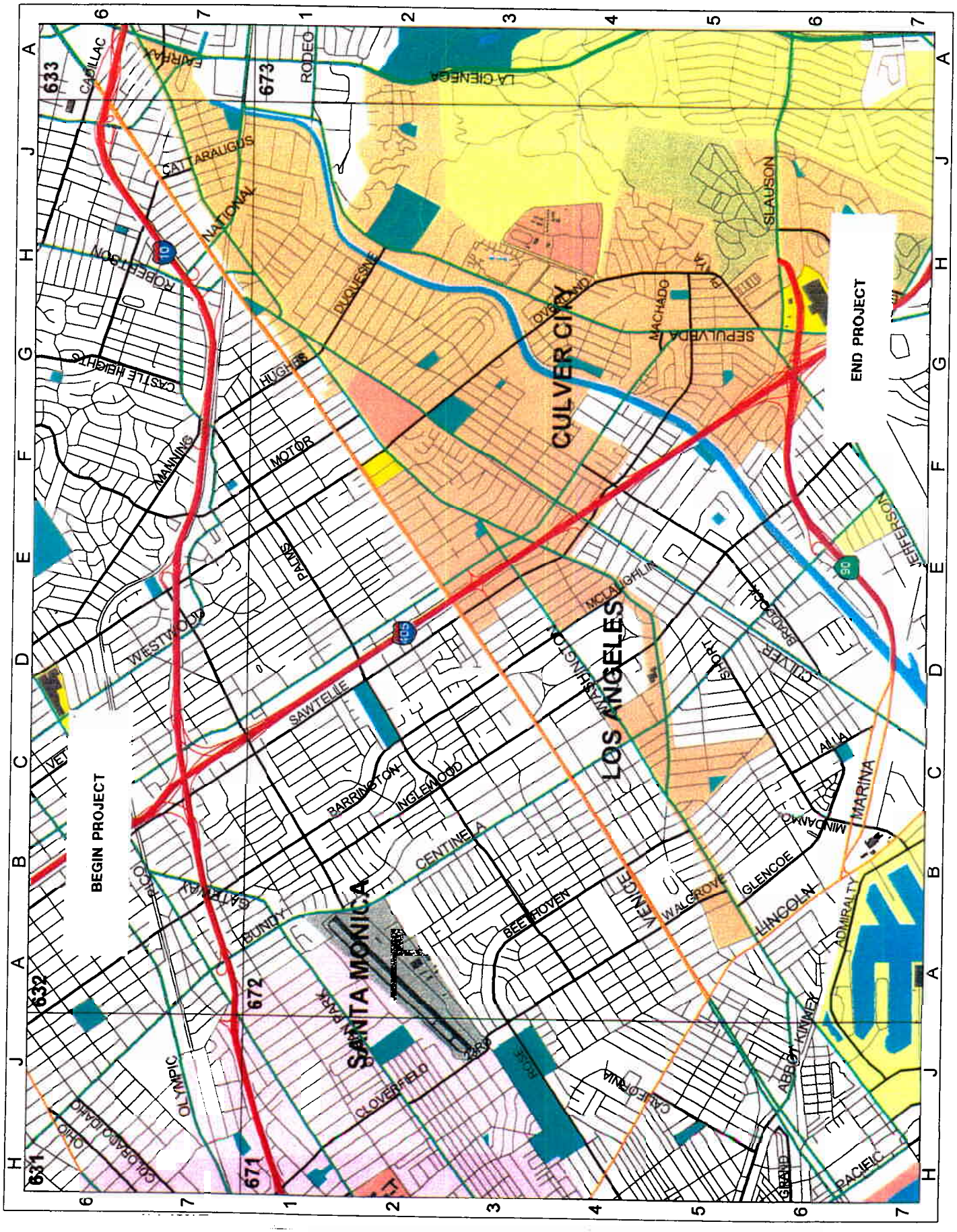


Figure 1 - Location Map
Los Angeles County
Project Location
County of Los Angeles Regional Location Map
Lancaster
Palmdale
Castaic
Ventura County
Moorpark
Simi Valley
Thousand Oaks
Woodland Hills
Hollywood
Pasadena
Azusa
Claremont
West Covina
Los Angeles
Long Beach
Rolling Hills
Garden Grove
10/01/98 • Eviron plan location maps

Figure 2 - Vicinity Map



(northbound) vehicles per hour (vph). Failure to make provisions for this increase in traffic will result in lane volume demands as high as 2,420 vehicles per lane per hour and a deteriorating Level of Service (LOS) by the year 2015 (see Traffic Congestion section for current LOS and definition). Based on current projections, a LOS rating of F-3 is expected by the year 2015. Incorporation of HOV lanes into this segment of I-405 will serve to alleviate existing congestion and provide a continuous HOV facility when all other HOV projects are complete. Adding the HOV lanes will ensure that the LOS for the freeway's mixed flow lanes will remain at F-0, and the LOS for the HOV lanes are expected to experience a level of D. The 1991 Route Concept Report recommends inclusion of HOV lanes to prevent a LOS worse than F-0 (see Traffic Congestion Section; Table 1). Alternatives presented address the incorporation of HOV lanes.

Construction of these lanes will leave only two gaps in the HOV system on I-405: (1) northbound between I-10 and U.S. Route 101 (US-101) and (2) southbound between I-10 and Waterford Street. The first gap is not currently programmed. The second gap is the first priority in the Traffic Operations Strategies program, and is anticipated to be funded in the 1998-2002 Augmented State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funding cycle.

One alternative under consideration (Alternative 3b) includes adding the two HOV lanes, one in each direction and ramp consolidation, which will help improve circulation on surface streets. The ramp consolidation will occur near Culver Boulevard, which will eliminate three isolated ramps and create two ramps near the intersection of Sawtelle Boulevard and Culver Boulevard.

Another alternative being considered (Modified Alternative 3ab) also includes an HOV lane in each direction with ramp consolidation to help relieve congestion on city streets. The ramp consolidation under this alternative includes removing both the northbound on- and off-ramps along Sawtelle Boulevard and installing a direct northbound off-ramp to Culver Boulevard. To help improve southbound freeway access, a frontage (service) road is being proposed to lead motorists from Culver Boulevard (via Sawtelle Boulevard) to the southbound on-ramp at Braddock Drive.

Traffic Congestion

This section of the freeway currently operates at LOS F-0 for most of the morning and evening peak periods, on weekdays and Saturdays (Table 1). A motorist's average speed during peak hours is roughly 48 km/hr (30 mph). With the current freeway capacity consisting of five mixed flow lanes in each direction, the LOS in five years is expected to deteriorate to a LOS of F-1, a level in which one-hour minimum congestion delays will be the norm.

The Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) traffic volume within the project area in 1998 was 306,400 and is forecasted to be 322,280 within five years (Table 2). The 1998 northbound morning peak hour volume is 9,350 vph while the southbound evening peak hour volume is 9,400 vph (Table 3).

Table 1 - Level of Service (LOS) and Equivalent V/C Ratios

Level of Service (LOS)	Volume to Capacity Ratio (V:C)	Interpretation
A	0.00 - 0.30	Free flow - excellent operation
B	0.31 - 0.48	Stable flow - very good operation
C	0.49 - 0.64	Stable flow - good operation
D	0.65 - 0.80	Approaching unstable flow – fair operation
E	0.81 – 0.90	Unstable flow - poor operation
F-0	0.91 – 1.05	Traffic congestion for 15 minutes to 1 hour
F-1	1.06 – 1.20	Traffic congestion for 1 to 2 hours
F-2	1.21 – 1.34	Traffic congestion for 2 to 3 hours
F-3	1.35 or more	Traffic congestion for more than 3 hours

Table 2 - Current and Forecasted Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes

I-405 Limits		1998 ADT Peak Month (Annual)	2003 ADT Peak Month (Annual)
Kilo Post (Post Mile)	Description		
39.05/41.72 (24.27/25.93)	La Tijera Bridge Overcrossing to Jefferson Boulevard Undercrossing	295,930 (283,810)	311,025 (298,287)
41.72/43.76 (25.93/27.20)	Jefferson Boulevard Undercrossing to Culver Boulevard Overhead	322,190 (311,080)	338,625 (326,948)
43.76/44.99 (27.20/27.96)	Culver Boulevard Overhead to SR-187 Junction (Venice Boulevard)	325,220 (313,100)	341,809 (329, 071)
44.99/47.53 (27.96/29.54)	SR-187 Junction (Venice Boulevard) to I-10 Northeast On-ramp	329,260 (316,130)	346,056 (332, 256)
47.53/48.56 (29.54/30.18)	I-10 Northeast On-ramp to Olympic Boulevard Undercrossing	321,180 (309,060)	337,563 (324, 825)
	Average	318,756 (306,636)	335,016 (322, 278)

Table 3 – Congestion Capacity Summary

Alternatives	LANES	DIRECTION	Peak Hour Volumes				Persons moved/ Peak Hour				Level of Service (LOS) Peak Hour		Accidents / Million Vehicle Mile (MVM)	
			Year 1998 Existing		Year 2011 Projected		Year 1998 Existing		Year 2011 Projected		Year 1998 Existing	Year 2011 Projected	Year 1998 Actual	Year 2011 Projected
			AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM				
NO BUILD	5	N	9350	9300	11575	12300	10750	11700	13900	16000	E	F-1	0.83	1.27
	5	S	8700	9400	10740	10930	10000	11850	12900	14250	E	F-0		
MIXED FLOW	5 +	N										Mixed Flow		
					10850	11660			11950	14000		F-0		
HOV	1				1250	1800			2900	4320		D		1.05
MIXED FLOW	5 +	S										Mixed Flow		
					10060	10680			11100	12850		F-0		
HOV	1				1050	1540			2420	3700		D		

Peak Period:	AM	6:00	to	9:00
	PM	15:00	to	19:00

Notes:

1. *Projected data is based on volumes anticipated five (5) years after opening to traffic.*
2. *Peak period varies according to area.*
3. *Actual and expected rates shown for Accidents/MVM are yearly rates. Expected rates are based on average daily traffic.*

Accident Rates

A study of the Traffic Accident Surveillance and Analysis System (TASAS) accident records reveal an accident rate of 1.22 accidents per million vehicle kilometers (MVkm) [0.76 accidents per million vehicle miles (MVM)] for this segment of I-405 from October 1994 to September 1999. These rates compare to an average of 2.03 accidents per MVkm (1.26 accidents per MVM) for similar facilities. The reported annual accident rates for I-405 between I-10 and SR-90 is derived from TASAS Table B in the Traffic Study Report (Table 4).

Between October 1994 and September 1999, a total of 697 and 774 accidents were reported on the northbound and southbound portions of I-405 between I-10 and SR-90, respectively. Over eighty percent (80%) of the accidents were typically congestion related, consisting of rear end collisions and sideswipes. Most of the accidents occurred during daylight hours, when the weather was clear, and the road surface was dry. Providing additional lanes should serve to alleviate congestion and, in turn, reduce the number of accidents.

Traffic Projections

Traffic demand projections for the Year 2020 were derived from the Los Angeles Regional Transportation System (LARTS), given along three segments of I-405: between Venice Boulevard [State Route 187 (SR-187)] to I-10, Culver Boulevard to SR-187, and SR-90 to Culver Boulevard (Table 5). Refer to Section 2.4 for details on the Ultimate Width Build Project Alternatives (Alternative 3a, 3b, and 3ab).

Table 4 - Accident Data from TASAS Table B[1]

	Northbound Actual		Northbound Average	
Year	F+I*	Total	F+I*	Total
1995	0.23	0.70	0.41	1.23
1996	0.23	0.74	0.41	1.23
1997	0.21	0.81	0.41	1.22
1998	0.23	0.85	0.41	1.21
1999	0.21	0.64	0.41	1.21
Total	0.21	0.74	0.41	1.22
	Southbound Actual		Southbound Average	
Year	F+I*	Total	F+I*	Total
1995	0.31	1.01	0.41	1.23
1996	0.26	0.86	0.41	1.23
1997	0.18	0.79	0.41	1.22
1998	0.18	0.64	0.41	1.21
1999	0.27	0.80	0.41	1.21
Total	0.25	0.82	0.41	1.22

1. Accident Rate Per Million Vehicle Miles of Travel
** = Fatal Plus Injury (F+I) Type Accidents*

Table 5 – LARTS Traffic Projections for Year 2020

Venice Blvd. to I-10	No Build		Alternative 3a, 3b, or 3ab			
	North	South	North	South	N/B HOV	S/B HOV
ADT (One-way)[1]	189,300	187,000	181,100	179,000	16,300	16,100
AM Peak	9,100	12,700	8,900	11,350	400	2,700
PM Peak	15,500	12,500	14,200	12,100	2,650	750
% Heavy Trucks	4.2	4.2	4.4	4.4	0.0	0.0
AM Average Speed	41	23	41	29	54	21
PM Average Speed	14	25	19	27	31	54
Culver Blvd. to Venice Blvd.	**No Build**		**Alternative 3a, 3b, or 3ab**			
	North	**South**	**North**	**South**	**N/B HOV**	**S/B HOV**
ADT (One-way)[1]	186,800	187,100	179,200	179,500	15,250	15,250
AM Peak	8,850	11,900	8,450	10,750	800	2,250
PM Peak	13,800	11,600	12,800	11,100	2,000	1050
% Heavy Trucks	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.9	0.0	0.0
AM Average Speed	41	27	43	33	54	30
PM Average Speed	20	29	23	32	39	53
SR-90 to Culver Blvd.	**No Build**		**Alternative 3a, 3b, or 3ab**			
	North	**South**	**North**	**South**	**N/B HOV**	**S/B HOV**
ADT (One-way)[1]	174,100	174,400	167,700	168,000	12,750	12,800
AM Peak	8,900	11,700	8,600	10,700	700	2,000
PM Peak	13,800	11,700	12,800	11,300	2,000	800
% Heavy Trucks	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.7	0.0	0.0
AM Average Speed	41	28	43	33	54	37
PM Average Speed	20	28	23	30	37	54

1. ADT = Average Daily Traffic